ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCOPE

High Prairie 161 kV Transmission Line and Substation in Mower County
High Prairie Wind Farm II LLC
October 19, 2006

High Prairie Wind Farm II, LLC (the Applicant) proposes to construct, operate, maintain, and own a new 161 kV high voltage transmission line and substation to be located in Mower County. The proposed 161 kV HVTL is intended to connect power produced from the proposed High Prairie Wind Farm II to the grid by connecting the project's substation to the Mower County Substation, and then transmit the power to the Adams Substation via an existing 161 kV transmission line. This project is eligible for local review under Minnesota Rule 4400.5000, and the Applicant has elected to seek a conditional use permit from the Mower County Board for the HVTL route. In accordance with Minnesota Rule 4400.5000 Subp. 5, an environmental assessment must be prepared for the Project, and the public must have an opportunity to participate in the development of the scope of the environmental assessment. The Applicant has developed this draft scope to share with the public, and the environmental assessment will address the following matters:

1 Introduction

- **1.1 Project Description**
- **1.2 Project Purpose**
- **1.3 Alternative Routes**

2 Regulatory Framework

- **2.1 Conditional Use Permit Requirement**
- **2.2 Environmental Assessment Requirement**
- **2.3 Certificate of Need Requirement**
- **2.4 Other Permits and Approvals Required**
  - ***2.4.1 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit – MPCA***
  - ***2.4.2 Notice of Construction – FAA***

3 Assessment of Impacts and Mitigation

- **3.1 Description of Environmental Setting**
- **3.2 Human Impacts**
  - ***3.2.1 Socioeconomic***
    - Local social and economic conditions will be described using existing census and economic data.
  - ***3.2.2 Noise***
    - Noise emitted by transmission lines in general will be described.
    - Minnesota Pollution Control Agency noise regulations will be summarized, and the Project's conformity to these regulations will be confirmed

3.2.3 *Visual impacts*

- Visual resources in the vicinity of the Project area will be summarized. Representative photographs of the area will be presented and a qualitative description of the visual impacts to the landscape will be summarized.

3.2.4 *Public services and infrastructure*

- Data collected through review of public maps and interview of county and utility company employees will be summarized and illustrated on Project maps. Where available and appropriate for inclusion, road traffic information, plans for new construction, and other related information will be collected and summarized. The discussion of impacts will include a description of new construction required to support the proposed development and any impacts this may have on the existing services or infrastructure.

3.2.5 *Cultural and archaeological impacts*

- A Class I Records search, including a formal information query issued to the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, will be conducted and will identify all known cultural resources in the Project area. The general history of the Project area will be summarized. A qualitative description of impacts to known resources will be prepared.
- A Class III inventory (also known as Phase I Archeological Assessment) of resources in the vicinity of proposed surface disturbances will be performed as necessary.

3.2.6 *Recreational resources*

- The primary recreation activities in the vicinity of the proposed Project will be listed and potential impacts will be described.
- Maps illustrating the location of public lands managed for recreation, including wildlife management areas, waterfowl production areas, historical monuments, and state lands, will also be provided and their proximity to proposed facilities will be described.

3.2.7 *Public health and safety*

- A general description of EMFs will be provided along with findings of the Minnesota State Interagency Working Group on EMF issues.
- Measures intended to preserve public safety will be summarized.

3.2.8 *Hazardous materials*

- Hazardous materials identified in the Project area during the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment will be briefly summarized.

3.2.9 *Land-based economics, including agriculture, forestry, and mining*

- The most recent available USDA Agricultural Census will be used to determine the primary crops and revenues for the County.
- Forestry is expected to be a very small industry in the vicinity of the Project area and will be only very briefly described.
- Geologic maps will be reviewed and county and state officials will be contacted to determine the extent of mineable reserves in the Project area.
- Impacts to agricultural, forestry, or mineral production will be described.

3.2.10 Tourism and community benefits

- Existing tourist attractions and local community promotional events will be described where potential for impact exists. The impact on tourism will be described, including potential benefits offered by construction of the proposed facility.

3.3 Impacts on Natural Environment

3.3.1 Topography

- The existing topography and landforms will be described. No impacts requiring description are anticipated.

3.3.2 Soils

- The existing USDA NRCS soil survey will be reviewed and soil types found in the areas proposed for disturbance will be described. The relative importance of these resources will be qualitatively examined. Erosion models or sediment loading calculations will not be developed within the scope of this proposal.
- Potential impacts to soil resources, including compaction and erosion, will be qualitatively described and appropriate mitigation measures will be proposed.

3.3.3 Geologic and groundwater resources

- The existing geology of the Project area will be described and the expected depth to groundwater will be determined based on available public records including the Mower County Well Index.

3.3.4 Surface water and floodplain resources

- US Geological Survey (USGS) topographic maps, Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Rate Maps, the Minnesota Public Waters and Wetlands Inventory (PWI) map, the National Hydrologic Inventory dataset, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetland Inventory (NWI), will be collectively reviewed to determine the location of floodplains and surface waters.
- Impacts to surface water resulting from construction are anticipated to be minimal. Best management practices will be proposed as mitigation measures to avoid or minimize impacts.

3.3.5 Wetlands

- NWI and PWI maps will be reviewed to determine the known or probable location of wetlands in the Project area.

3.3.6 Vegetation

- The native and current vegetation of the Project area will be described.
- The importance of impacted vegetative cover or communities will be described and mitigation measures focused on restoring the pre-disturbance cover will be developed with the concurrence of HPWFI.

3.3.7 Wildlife

- Information on resident bird, mammal (including bats), reptile, amphibian, and insect populations will be reviewed and summarized with focus on avian species, bats, and State or Federally listed sensitive species. Existing information will provide the basis of this description.

- Impacts will be described based on the results of monitoring at other facilities in the state and consultation with local state and Federal wildlife agency staff. Mitigation measures will be developed as appropriate.

3.3.8 Rare and unique natural resources

- State and Federally listed species or habitats known to occur in the vicinity of the Project will be identified and their likelihood of occurrence in the Project area will be determined.

4 Feasibility of Alternatives